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Graduate Research Papers. 930.
https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/930

Caught or taught : development of a middle school spelling program

Abstract

In this literature review, the author explored research studies and literature about literacy to learn more about spelling instruction. Although much research has been done in the area of spelling instruction, little has changed in spelling instruction in the typical middle school classroom (Templeton, 2002a).

This review gives a brief overview of the basic composition of the English language and the history of the teaching of spelling in the United States. Research is reviewed that deals with the acquisition of spelling based on the developmental spelling continuum (Bear, Invemizzi, Templeton & Johnston, 1996). The author explored the connection between reading, writing, and spelling.

As a result of this exploration, a program was designed to teach students spelling at their developmental spelling level. Explicit strategy instruction is utilized in this design to allow students to form inductive conclusions about spelling patterns and strategies.

CAUGHT OR TAUGHT:

DEVELOPMENT OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL SPELLING PROGRAM

A Graduate Literature Review

Submitted to the

Division of Middle Level Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Jennie M. Johnson

April 2006

This Literature Review by: Jennie M. Johnson

Titled: CAUGHT OR TAUGHT: DEVELOPMENT OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL

SPELLING PROGRAM

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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This review gives a brief overview of the basic composition of the English language and the history of the teaching of spelling in the United States. Research is reviewed that deals with the acquisition of spelling based on the developmental spelling continuum (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton & Johnston, 1996). The author explored the connection between reading, writing, and spelling.

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Acknowledgements

I could not have made this Master's degree trip for my MAE (Master of Arts in Education) degree without my family. A big thank you to my parents who taught me perseverance and hard work. Thank you to my wonderful husband who put up with a messy house, microwave meals, and a crabby wife. Thanks to my children: Matt, Kristina, and David, who each supported me in their own loving ways.

To my new adopted family, my college cohort ICN colleagues, thank you for bearing with me. Brett, thanks for all the prompting and encouragement. Your calmness during technical difficulties gave me a much needed balance. Gina, thanks for having Baby Cale during this time to show us all that life does go on! Kelly, thanks for going the distance just to be with us! And to Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas, thanks for mothering and mentoring all of us; you not only helped us in our education degree, but you also helped us with professional and personal advice!

CAUGHT OR TAUGHT: DEVELOPMENT OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL SPELLING

PROGRAM

Chapter One

Introduction

Spelling, "the process of converting thoughts to visual form by placing graphic

symbols-letters on some writing surface"(Hodges, 1984, ¶ 3), is a challenge for many

middle school students. This process affects almost every assignment completed for any

middle school subject, not just the subject of language arts. As a society we even form

judgments about one's intelligence based on his/her written communication, which

involves correctly or incorrectly spelled words. Based on these two observations, spelling

appears to be a very important process or skill.

The teaching of spelling at the middle level has long been an area where many

educators disagree. At the very base of this disagreement is the belief whether there is a

difference about the basic process of spelling.   In fact, these spelling philosophies seem to

divide educators into two major opposing camps in the battle of spelling instruction. Seda

(1989) reports one group advocates spelling as an organized system with a systematic

one-to-one sound-letter relationship and the other group views English spelling as a

chaotic, inconsistent process with no true governing rules. Even back in 1899 there were

those who felt our English spelling system was a mess; the famous Mark Twain yearned

for a spelling system where words could be spelled "definitely" and "simply" just by their

1

sound (Lederer, 1989).

In addition to the fact that this division over the very foundation of spelling exists, educators have the challenge of teaching it in middle school. This involves another controversy: Should spelling be taught in an organized manner in middle school or should we eliminate spelling instruction and the time it consumes since many believe that spelling is a skill that can be absorbed by the process of osmosis? The position taken on this question is primarily established by one's position in the main division of the camps. If spelling is an organized process, this process should be able to be taught in an organized method with those structures used in the organization of spelling. If it is not organized, then possibly it can't be taught in any manner other than absorption. Whether organized teaching is needed or absorption is the best method to learn how to spell, one must decide what strategies work the best in either the organized or the absorption method.

Rationale for Selected Topic

As a middle school language arts teacher, I am responsible for the instruction and the students' acquisition of spelling skills. For the last twelve years, East Middle School (EMS) teachers have discussed their feelings of frustrations with the spelling curriculum (anonymous personal communications, 1993-2005). Several factors have played into this frustration. Middle school students struggle with spelling, and the language arts class period does not allow adequate spelling instruction time. This frustration continues to grow because even though parents, teachers, and society maintain that spelling is important, a separate spelling grade is not recorded on the middle school student's report card. This frustration has led to this literature review about the history of spelling, spelling acquisition, various spelling approaches, what works and what doesn't seem to

work in teaching spelling.

Middle school students struggle with spelling. Over the twelve years that I have taught, I have observed that words learned for a weekly spelling test are soon forgotten, the same errors are made over and over, what has been "learned" for weekly tests doesn't transfer into everyday writing, and basic words sometimes cause the most problems. Teachers comments have included: "They can't spell diddly," "Their spelling drives me nuts," "They don't know basic words," "They just don't know how to spell" (D. Rose, S. Dinsmore, & J. Long, personal communications, 2001). These comments were voiced in the EMS teachers' lounge. These sentiments were repeated over and over in the various sources that were read for this review (Sipe, 2002; Templeton & Morris,1999; Morris, Blanton, Blanton, & Perney, 1995). Beers (2002) voiced this frustration well when she wrote, "And, I began a litany I was to repeat for many years: 'These kids can't spell!'" (p. 4).

Spelling instructional time limited. Another factor of frustration was that in the middle school language arts classroom, spelling instructional time is often limited. There is no longer a separate time slot for spelling instruction. The tightly-packed curriculum allows little room for expanded spelling instruction. An EMS teacher, who taught in elementary before coming to the middle school, compared the elementary spelling program to the one in her middle school classroom:

> Spelling was a part of the class. And they took it home because
> they were excited about homework. Spelling is a part of the class
> [at the middle school], but it is primarily your own responsibility to
> study it here at this level and they don't want to take any more home

than they have to. (L. Kurth, personal communication, September 2003)

Spelling is a "valid" subject in elementary schools. Ormrod (1986) stated, "In elementary school, the teaching of spelling is a major component of the curriculum" (p. 160). Not only is it a major component at the elementary school level, but it is also a subject that has its own time slot in the schedule of the elementary day so that direct instruction and intentional learning can take place. Another teacher addressed the language arts teacher's full curriculum load, "One concern of the language arts teacher was that she just did not have time to get it all in" (Salyers, 1992, ¶ 2).

Spelling grades not required. Elementary students receive a report card grade for the subject of spelling. There is not even a blank for recording spelling grades on the middle school report card. Is this because spelling is no longer important? A retired language arts teacher, who had taught at middle level for twenty years, does not recall any grade ever being recorded for spelling separately from the language arts grade. However, she said, "Yet, that was one of most asked questions by parents: How is my son/daughter's spelling?"(P. White, personal communication, January 2006).

Do educators believe that spelling has already been learned and mastered in elementary? Both researchers and classroom teachers answer a strong resounding "NO" to question. Templeton and Morris report Fischer et al. (1985) stated, "Spelling is not a skill that is fully acquired as a part of elementary education" (1999, ¶ 48). If spelling is not fully acquired in elementary, it should be addressed in some manner in middle school. Yet Templeton (2002a) found that "though students' spelling skills are an issue at middle grades, spelling is rarely addressed" (p. 8).

Importance of spelling is lacking. Language arts teachers would be quick to tell an

inquiring parent that spelling is important and that spelling and the spelling grade is incorporated into the language arts curriculum and grade. Parents feel that spelling is very important. In one school district, 77 % of the parents who replied to a survey stated that spelling was "extremely important" and none of the parents responded that it was anything less than "important" (Chandler & Mapleton Teacher Research Group 2000).

Teachers agree that spelling is important. When asked if spelling was important, one language arts teacher responded, "Of course it is important. If I can't make out the words, how can I tell if the ideas are good? They haven't communicated yet if I can't read it." Another replied, "While I don't think spelling is everything, it is important and they [students] will get low scores in conventions, which will impact their final grade." (N. Brock & S. Dinsmore, personal communications, 2005). Most subjects that are important are tested. How do we show progress in spelling? It is difficult to show spelling achievement gains when weekly tests or periodic retention spelling tests aren't given. It is even more difficult to justify a standardized test score in spelling with that of weekly spelling test averages, or even more difficult justifying written work containing too many spelling errors. Teachers must consider this and be able to justify their instruction.

Deep questions are then raised: Just how important is spelling? When is it important? Could the teaching of spelling be used to help us reach our goals in other areas such as writing and reading? If spelling is important, how do we convey that to students and to parents? The above frustrations and questions led to this research.

Purpose of Review Results

The goal of this literature review is to establish what should be happening with spelling instruction in the middle school classroom. Many areas must be considered when

one considers the subject of spelling and the middle school curriculum. The history of English spelling will give a foundation for the review. An exploration of spelling instruction in the past will lead up to current understandings of spelling instruction. To understand current spelling instruction philosophies, one needs to understand the basic composition of the spelling process and the basic educational development of students.

Examining the connections with reading and writing will be another element of this research. It has always been my personal belief that there is a connection, though I am not sure what. If there is, what might be the significance be of a better spelling program? With an understanding of all these elements established, an examination of the instructional processes and practices that would best benefit the middle school student will be conducted.

My review through the current literature should not only provide a better understanding of the spelling process, but should result in better teaching on my part.

Importance of Review

This research will result in a changed spelling program in one middle school teacher's classroom: the writer of this paper. That should affect at least one hundred EMS students per year. These students should become better spellers because of this understanding of spelling and spelling acquisition and because of new instructional practices used. However, it runs deeper than that. Some answers or suggestions will be readily available and substantiated with research when colleagues and parents ask me, "What are *you* doing about spelling this year?"

The revised program of instruction should work because it will be designed from the research findings of many others. Instead of learning by personal trial-and-error that

could last a lifetime, victories and failures of others were examined to design a program likely to succeed. Research has revealed many interesting results, yet as Stetson (1985) (as cited in Seda, 1989, p.319) pointed out, "Research has resulted in much information, yet what happens instructionally is not what research has shown to be best instructional practice." How can this research become a part of the language arts classroom?

Terminology

In discussing the topic of spelling and spelling achievement, it is important to have a clear understanding of terms. The following terms and definitions will be used throughout this paper:

Spelling - "the process of converting oral language to visual form by placing graphic symbols-letters on some writing surface" (Hodges, 1984, p.2).

Invented spelling - a spelling that a student uses to represent a certain word. This is not the correct spelling from the dictionary. An invented spelling for *snake* could be *snak* (Templeton & Morris, 1999).

Morphological knowledge- recognition and understanding of single linguistic units of meaning (e.g. walk and the suffix -ing in walking).

Orthographic knowledge - recognition and understanding of correct spelling

Phonological awareness-the ability to deal explicitly and segmentally with sound units smaller than the syllable (Stanovich,1993-94).

Recognition - being able to identify a correctly spelled word by seeing the printed symbols.

Recall - being able to write a correctly spelled word from memory.

Spelling basal - textbook compiled specifically to teach spelling.

Holistic - "instruction that focuses on visual, auditory, and kinesthetic imagery, involving the learner in strategies and activities that emphasize the learning of a word in its whole word form" (Stetson, 1984) (as cited in Seda, 1989, p.318).

Visual storage - the ability to store and retrieve previously experienced visual sensations and perceptions when the stimulus that originally evoked them is no longer present (Scott & Masterson, 1996).

Guiding Research Questions

Many questions could be examined in the study of spelling. The one main question addressed in this research is this:

- What spelling program will best increase the spelling achievement of middle school students and help them to become more proficient and accurate spellers?

To answer this question, several others must be answered:

- What is the history behind spelling?

- What is the history of spelling instruction?

- How important is spelling in middle school?

- What are some validated instructional spelling practices?

Considering these questions should result in an answer to the first question: What spelling program will best increase the spelling achievement of middle school students and help them to become more proficient and accurate spellers?

Chapter Two

Methodology

When tackling a literature review project, a plan of action needs to be established early in the process. First sources needed to be found and many sources existed. Using several different libraries and search engines, materials were found on the topic of spelling, using several different libraries and search engines. Next the decision was made as to which materials were to actually be read. To read everything printed about spelling would be too large of a task. Materials were selected on topics that specifically fit my needs: spelling acquisition, middle school spelling instruction, and special education needs.

After reading the selected materials, I analyzed them. While making note cards, I quickly found some authors were more prevalent than others. Many of the theories and research seemed to support each other, while some conflicted. In sorting through these, I tried to analyze my materials in an unbiased manner, but giving more attention to works that seemed to correlate with and support each other.

Every piece of literature was approached from the point of view that it might hold some truths in answering the following questions:

- What spelling program will best increase the spelling achievement of middle school students and help them to become more proficient and accurate spellers?

- What is the history behind spelling?

- What is the history of spelling instruction?

- How important is spelling in middle school?

- What are some validated instructional spelling practices?

Locating Sources

Several different avenues were used to obtain reading material for this research. A trip was made to the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Various key words or key phrases such as *spelling, middle school, spelling research, spelling problems, middle school spelling, and spelling programs* were used to initially find several books and journal articles. This primary search then revealed other key words such as *spelling developmental stages/levels, invented spellings, spelling strategies, spelling achievement*, and various authors' names. These articles were photocopied at the library so they would be easily accessible at my home several hours away.

Some information was gathered from my personal library. Since spelling has been a long-standing topic of interest for me, several books and journals on my shelves were revisited.

In reading those the materials from both the Rod Library and my library, various other authors or books were mentioned. Some of those books were ordered through the local area education agency (AEA). Those not obtainable through the AEA were sought after through the Interlibrary Loan Program at the local public library.

Some information was gathered through the use of the electronic sources. Some articles were found just by using well-known computer search engines, such as Yahoo or Google. In other searches, the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) was used and resulted in articles that were then sought through either the local area education association or through interlibrary loan.

Selection and Analysis of Sources

Contemporary. The topic of spelling is very broad. One author asserts that it is one

of the most researched areas of the language arts curriculum (Seda, 1991), so it was

necessary to organize my search in some manner. Selections were made from materials

that were relatively recent. Those printed within the last thirty years were given greater

precedence, although in trying to understand the history of spelling it was necessary to

consider some earlier research and history. Some references with older publication dates

were difficult to find, and in some instances, those citations of older works which were

listed in recent works are referred to in this research with the appropriate credit given.

Middle school. Special attention was given to works that were specifically related

to middle school education and students. Some research with elementary students was

read after noting the importance of developmental spelling levels. The rationale being that

some middle school students could still be at a developmental level normally seen in

elementary grades.

Special needs students. Since EMS will be going to full inclusion of special

education students in the regular education classroom, research exploring ways to best

meet those students' spelling needs was also read. Not all of it was included in this

writing; however, that which was relevant was mentioned.

Credibility. In all research, the credibility of the various authors was examined.

Several internet sources were not used because of the lack of credibility. Sites that

appeared to be personal sites or that weren't supported with sources were eliminated.

Sites providing resources were cross-referenced to gain credibility.

Criteria for Inclusion of Materials

Analysis of materials. In addition to the criteria used to select materials to review,

the analysis of works actually included in this research had its own additional

requirements. With each source, a conscious decision was made whether to include it or not. Several criteria were used. Was the research supported by sound facts? Were the studies large enough to provide valid research? Was the methodology appropriate? What was the expertise, authority, and credibility of the researcher?

Leading researchers who are respected in the field of spelling research and who were well-published received careful consideration. Research which was documented and supported by other separate research weighed more heavily. If different researchers from various time periods and under their own initiatives concluded similar results, their results were considered valid and worth reviewing. This is not to say that small, little heard of research is not valid, but that when several studies by leading researchers produce similar results or results that support one another, then those research studies were utilized in this literature review.

In many ways, the process for selection and analysis of the material limited what I included in this literature review, making it a stronger paper and should result in a type of middle school spelling program for my classroom.

Presentation of conflicting information. In some instances some of the spelling research seemed to support conflicting spelling philosophies. Every effort was made in the presentation of this research to eliminate all self-preconceived opinions and biases; multiple, and at times conflicting perspectives were included.

The purpose of this paper is was to review past information and research about spelling instruction for middle school students. In order to do that, the facts needed to be reported. The past cannot be discounted as of little value, but as a source from which to learn. This is true in the advancement of any field of study. Therefore, the spelling

research supporting different teaching methods throughout the history of the teaching of

spelling teaching was included.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

In exploring the topic of spelling, the actual process of spelling was investigated.

Once the system of English spelling was explored, the history of spelling instruction was

addressed. The work on the developmental continuum of spelling stages added to the

understanding of spelling acquisition. The needs and learning styles of middle school

students, whether good or poor spellers, were considered. The reading, writing, and

spelling connection was studied, along with the best teaching practices of spelling. This

investigation of spelling is a direct result of this author's pursuit to find a better spelling

program that has the best chance of improving spelling achievement for her students.

At first consideration, teaching spelling might appear to be a very basic teaching

skill. In fact, one of the first tasks frequently assumed by student teachers is that of giving

the weekly spelling test. In reality, each year a middle school language arts teacher must

decide what to do about spelling. Educators must address these questions: How do I move

my students forward in their spelling acquisition? How do I measure growth? Should a

spelling basal be used? Should the students use a weekly spelling list? Where can I obtain

the word lists? What words should be on the word lists? Should spelling even be taught in

middle school?

At EMS, language arts teachers are responsible for spelling growth which involves

two challenging issues. One challenge involves instructional time. They are not given any

additional class time, but rather must incorporate spelling instruction into an already full,

tightly-packed language arts curriculum. The second challenge is the ability of the

students. Students come to middle school teachers with a wide variety of spelling abilities.

The importance of spelling is contradictory; a grade for spelling is not sent home to parents on report cards, yet parents and administration both expect it to be addressed.

This author saw the necessity of finding a spelling program that could be managed in an already full language arts curriculum and that could meet students' individual needs by allowing them to make personal spelling growth. The program needed to be one which students, parents, administrators, and teachers could all see the value.

In order to discover a spelling program that had the best chance at being successful, this author looked at several aspects of spelling. This required an understanding of the history of spelling, how spelling is learned and acquired, various spelling approaches, and what instructional methods result in improved student spelling. The questions considered in this research are these:

- What is the history behind spelling?

- What is the history of spelling instruction?

- How important is spelling in middle school?

- What are some validated instructional spelling practices?

After a satisfactory answer to these questions, the author should be able to answer the overall guiding question of this research:

- What spelling program will best increase the spelling achievement of middle school students and help them to become more proficient and accurate spellers?

English Spelling System

English is a very unique language. Spelling involves assigning sound to the printed symbols. The English alphabet has 26 letters and over 40 sound units assigned to those

letters or letter combinations (Neubert, 1990). Already the stage is set for the challenging

adventure of spelling. Then add consider the oddities and inconsistencies found in T.S.

Watt's poem published in the Manchester Guardian on June 21, 1954 (Lederer, 1989),

entitled "English."

<div style="text-align:center">English</div>

I take it you already know

Of *tough* and *bough* and *cough* and *dough*?

Others may stumble, but not you

On *hiccough*, *thorough*, *lough*, and *through*.

Well done! And now you wish, perhaps,

To learn of less familiar traps?

Beware of *heard*, a dreadful word

That looks like *beard* and sounds like *bird*.

And *dead*; it's said like *bed*, not *bead*--

For goodness' sake don't call it "deed"!

Watch out for *meat* and *great* and *threat*.

(They rhyme with *suite* and *straight* and *debt*.)

A *moth* is not a *moth* in *mother*,

Nor *both* in *bother*, *broth* in *brother*,

And *here* is not a match for *there*,

Nor *dear* and *fear* for *bear* and *pear*,

And then there's *close* and *rose* and *lose*

Just look them up--and *goose* and *choose*,

And *cork* and *work* and *cord* and *ward*,

And *font* and *front* and *word* and *sword*,

And *do* and *go* and *thwart* and *cart*--

Come, come, I've hardly made a start!

A dreadful language? Man alive!

I'd mastered it when I was five.

And yet to write it, the more I tried,

I hadn't learned at fifty-five.

It is easy to understand why some believe that spelling has no rhyme or reason and why

they would be in agreement with Beers (2002) who states, "The English alphabet is at

once remarkably rich and woefully inadequate"(p. 5).

Being able to line up a sound for a symbol is the use of phonetics. After reading

Watt's poem, one might think spelling phonetically would be an impossibility in English.

However, all English words do not pose such a problem. Research by Hanna, Hanna,

Hodges, and Rudorf (1966) (as cited by Seda, 1989) showed that 50 percent of the

English language can be spelled phonetically. This leaves the other 50 percent of English

words which spellers cannot rely on phonetics for correctly spelling.

When spellers cannot rely on phonics to spell a word, they then need to rely on the

other elements or layers of spelling. Work done by Henderson and Templeton asserts that

there are three layers of information in spelling. Besides alphabetic/phonetic relationships,

spelling involves learning different patterns, and also groups of letters that represent meaning (Henderson & Templeton, 1986). An example of a pattern would be the silent *e* words that have a vowel, consonant, silent *e* pattern, as in *hope*. Another pattern, vowel diagraph, I learned in elementary was when two vowels walk together the first says its name and the second one is silent, as in *boat* or *plain*. Numerous patterns exist and can be taught.

The last layer of information in spelling is that of meaning. In this layer, words contain groups of letters or units of meaning, for example *persuade/persuasion* or *hope/hopeful*. Naturally this is the last level to be utilized because one must learn to spell the smaller words or word units before one can make this application. Spelling must be seen as something more than just a representation of sound, but also as a representation of meaning (Templeton, 2002a).

Some meaning units come from Latin or Greek, but once learned help with the spelling of many related words. Learning meaning units/roots helps with many of these words; such as, *mort* in *mortal, immortal, mortuary, mortify*, and *mortality*. In addition to these roots, the English language is complicated further because people have adopted entire words from other languages such as these commonly used words: *rodeo, taco*, or *concierge*.

By examining the composition of English words, the challenges faced by those who want to spell words correctly is better understood. Spelling is complex. What is the best method to teach this complex subject?

What are our choices? A, B, and C were examined. The continuum of spelling developmental levels is supported by the research of Masterson and Crede (1999).

Spelling knowledge is composed of three different elements (1999). Inductive learning is one. Students need to be lead to conclusions about spelling and the spelling processes. Once they gain basic knowledge, new information can be scaffolded, using the previous learning as a foundation. Finally some definite and explicit teaching needs to be done (Masterson & Crede, 1999).

Prior to the 1800s, teaching spelling was primarily a large part of teaching reading. In the early colonies, students learned to read by memorizing words from spelling books before they read connected text (Haskins, 1997). To do this, they first learned the alphabet and how it could be used to form 180 different syllables. In 1939, Horace Mann promoted whole word memorization by drill and practice (Fresch, 2003). By the1930s, there was a complete separation of reading from spelling. This was when reading basals were popular and spelling words came from high-frequency word lists. This promoted the use of grade level spelling books, and the "pretest on Monday, drill and practice throughout the week, and test on Friday" routine (Haskins, 1997).

History of Spelling Instruction

By the1980s and 1990s, the focus on spelling instruction hit a low (Zutell, n.d.). This came about because of a more holistic approach to reading and spelling gaining favor in the literature and in practice.. Whole language was prevalent and educators felt that if students were exposed to much reading, spelling would come naturally (Zutell, n.d.).

This brings us to the current century. What is being done? Amazingly, most teachers teach the way they were taught (Graham, 1983). Even though spelling research on (1) how students learn and on (2) spelling instruction best practices has been done over the years, it appears that it hasn't changed the instructional spelling habits of most

teachers.

Developmental Research

In the 1970s and 1980s researchers, such as Read and Henderson with the famous Virginia Studies, explored students' developmental spelling knowledge (Haskins, 1997). In this research, the reliability of English was linked to the development of students' spelling skills. Read explored the invented spelling errors and found that they consistently changed over time as the student progressed in spelling acquisition. From this research, he identified five distinct developmental levels of spelling competency: preliterate, literate, within word, syllable juncture, and derivational constancy (Haskins, 1997).

The student starts the adventure of spelling in the preliterate stage. This is the stage where they want to write so they use symbols (even scribbles) to represent words. As the spelling development advances to the next level, the literate level, actual alphabetical letters are associated with sounds. In the third stage, the within-word pattern, Students move to spelling letter by letter and understand that combinations of letters can produce one sound. At the syllable juncture stage, students now understand the within-word pattern and combine syllables to spell longer words. They know how to add suffixes and prefixes. Finally at the top of the spelling continuum is derivational constancy. Students spell words containing Latin and Greek roots or bases (Haskins, 1997).

Many others have explored the validity of the developmental continuum of spelling acquisition since those first studies (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 1996; Gentry, 1982; Henderson, 1990; Zutell, n.d).

To understand spelling development means we must (a) know
about the nature of the spelling system--the different layers of

information the system reflects and (b) know what students under-

stand about these layers of information at different points along

the developmental continuum (Bear & Templeton, 1998, p.224).

Earlier this paper referred to the three layers of the English spelling system which

Bear and Templeton are referring in the first part (a) of above quoted passage. These are

alphabetic/phonetic relationships, various letter patterns, and letter units that represent

meaning. The developmental spelling continuum (b) is based on the belief that

progressively abstract layers of the spelling system are best learned at different stages of

the learning continuum.

Some researchers established three stages, while others like Henderson have the

five stages (Gentry, 1982; Ehri, 1987; Henderson, 1990). Bear and Templeton (1998)

present a six stage developmental continuum. This continuum breaks down the preliterate

and literate stages of Read and Henderson into three stages prephonemic, semi

phonemic/early letter names and letter names. Although the focus of this literature review

is on the middle level, which involves the last three stages rather than the beginning stages

of spelling, Bear and Templeton's divisions into three early stages is a more thorough and

defined continuum. In the author's observation of her own children, she saw this

progression in their spelling development, therefore the selection of the six stage

continuum (see Appendix A).

Additional studies (Masterson & Crede, 1999) show that several factors affect a

child's knowledge and use of spelling strategies including phonological awareness, visual

storage, orthographic knowledge, morphological knowledge, cognitive abilities and

instructional techniques. These factors all fit nicely in Bear and Templeton's

developmental continuum.

Bear and Templeton's developmental continuum fits almost all children, whether they are developing at a normal rate or have some sort of slowed development or learning disability (Worthy & Invernizzi, 1990). One exception does exist; students with hearing loss do not necessarily follow this typical pattern of development (Bear & Templeton, 1998). While almost all children follow this same order of stages and must go through each stage, some will go through at a slower pace (Worthy & Invernizzi, 1990). Some children may never advance to the higher levels, but will continue on the developmental continuum stages of progression as far as they are capable of advancing.

Determining a student's developmental level can be accomplished using an evaluation test or inventory. Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton & Johnston (1996) offer the Qualitative Spelling Inventory Spelling-By-Stage Assessment in their book, *Words Their Way*. Since spelling is observable in writing samples, one could use the Qualitative Spelling Checklist from the same book. By using both assessments, a spelling developmental level can be established.

Spelling in Middle School

The last three developmental levels (within-word pattern, syllable juncture, and derivational constancy) all fall within the middle school age range, which in itself seems to be justification for a spelling program at the middle level (Bear & Templeton, 1998). However, the development of exceptional and effective instruction practices in the area of spelling is rarely addressed in middle school, even though it is not a skill that is fully acquired in elementary school. (Templeton, 2002a). Sipe (2003) said in her book, "[spelling] instruction--even poor instruction--had generally stopped at the elementary

school level" (p. 50).

Middle school spelling has not been researched as extensively as elementary spelling. For example, in one study on the impact on natural spelling (no real spelling instruction, but rather just an absorption type method), the researchers were quick to admit that no credible evidence exists for spelling research with students beyond primary grades (Graham, 2000). Another study found that students with spelling and learning difficulties did not make much spelling progress when spelling instruction stopped in upper elementary grades (Gerber, 1986).

The National Council of Teachers of English advised in their SLATE Starter Sheet (n.d.) that students "can benefit immensely from mini lessons that help to discover the meanings of Latin and Greek roots and suffixes" (p. 5). According to Sipe (2002), middle school and high school students need continued strategic instruction that will help them to have a deeper understanding of the rules and patterns that guide correct spellings. These recommendations support the developmental continuum and emphasize that spelling education needs to take place in the middle school.

Poor Spellers Versus Good Spellers

Middle school has both *good and poor spellers*, or maybe a more accurate description might be *natural spellers and challenged spellers*. These two types of spellers aren't just school students; eventually, they grow up. According to some estimates reported by Kelly (1992) (as cited in Sipe, 2003), as many as one out of every five U.S. adults have significant difficulty with spelling.

Sipe observed several differences in these two categories of spellers: natural and challenged (2003). The first observation is that poor or challenged spellers usually struggle

with visual memory. Visual cueing systems don't support challenged spellers like they do the non-challenged. If spelling is only a visual memory process then this would mean certain failure for students with poor visual memory. However earlier in this work, support was found that spelling is a multi-layered skill.

Gentry (1987) (as cited in Neubert, 1990) concluded that some poor spellers are poor spellers because they cannot memorize. One operating philosophy of spelling acquisition is that spelling is simply visual memory. This does not agree with the developmental continuum of spelling. If one were to spell entirely using this philosophy, one must remember that there are more strategies that can be utilized than just visual memory. Taylor (1987), who recommends the use of mnemonics, writes, "Spelling is largely memory: it's an exercise in recalling a sequence of letters not necessarily based on logic or phonetics" (p. 16). Mnemonics is one answer among many strategies a student might use. Even with spelling acquisition following the spelling continuum, a student may rely on some useful strategies from time to time. Students with visual memory problems do tend to compensate by using other strategies if they are aware of them (Sipe, 2003). Poor spellers are more apt to rely on only a single strategy (Thompson & Block, 1990).

While good spellers will use visual memory and apply common spelling patterns to the process of spelling a word, poor spellers tend to use more sounding out strategies (Seda, 1991). Poor spellers are more likely to use externally based strategies like asking someone or using a spell checker or dictionary rather than using some sort of internal strategy that the good speller might use, such as known word patterns. Sometimes if the spelling is too much effort, the poor speller will just choose a word already known that will work instead (Sipe, 2003). This strategy limits the poor speller's writing performance

due to limited word choice.

Whether good spellers have more natural ability or not is rather difficult to evaluate. More work is needed to better understand the part that natural ability plays in spelling learning (Thompson & Block, 1990). We do know that naturally good spellers seem to learn additional new word spellings better than poor spellers when given the same new words to learn (Ormrod, 1986).

Reading, Writing, and Spelling Connections

Most language arts teachers who I have conferred with agree that reading, writing, and spelling are all related. It is hard to do one well and not the other well. Development in one area of literacy relates to the development in other areas of literacy (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 1996). Templeton and Morris (1999) cited four studies concluding that the process of writing words and of reading words come from the same base of word knowledge.

It may be difficult to prove which comes first. Frith (1980)(as cited in Ehri & Wilce, 1987) concluded that most good readers are also good spellers; only about two percent are poor spellers. Wilhelm (2002) says, "When taught as systematic knowledge, the skills kids learn regarding spelling can help them be better thinkers, readers, and writers" (p. 38). To understand how words are put together is a means to more efficient and proficient writing and reading (Sipe, 2003).

The unique relationship between spelling, writing, and reading, might encourage the belief that spelling acquisition is just absorbed and one would simply become a better speller by reading more. To some degree this may be true. One study, Edelsky (1990) (as cited in Graham, 1999) concluded that spelling can be "caught" or "absorbed" and that

production skills do not have to be taught separately. However, another study shows that knowing within-word patterns used in spelling gives greater speed and efficiency in writing and reading (Bear et al., 1996). Graham's 9 (2000) study concluded that reading can influence spelling, but the effects are very modest so that spelling should be taught and not just caught. Perhaps it is possible to learn some spelling by absorption, but a systematic study of strategies and patterns may increase the level of spelling acquisition.

Templeton cites several studies which concluded that the influence of spelling on reading is stronger than the influence of reading on spelling (Templeton, 2002a). Perfetti (1997)"(as cited in Templeton, 2002a, p. 13) believes that the "practice of spelling should help reading more than the practice at reading helps spelling. Templeton and Morris (1999) advocate the more a student understands about the structure of words (spelling) the better he/she should be able to read. Yet another study, Beck and McKeown (1991)(as cited in Bear et al., 1996) concluded that students learn to read words whose patterns they understand. These two studies validate the need to teach spelling patterns.

Spelling is important to writing growth (Templeton, 2002a). Many students equate spelling with writing. They let poor spelling get in the way of writing (Sipe, 2003). Students will not use words they don't know how to spell, which limits their word choice (Templeton, 2002a).

This brings up the whole issue of proofreading. It is one thing to spell well on a weekly test and quite another to spell correctly in one's written work. Thibodeau (2002) found exactly what language arts teachers have experienced for years: great weekly spelling tests do not guarantee that students' written spelling would be better or contain less spelling errors. Even given the use of electronic spellers, fourth, fifth and sixth grade

students in one study only detected 59.1 percent of the misspellings in the first place and left the other 40.8 percent undetected (Gerlach, Johnson, & Ouyang, 1991). Ultimately, where spelling really counts is in writing and this is where students struggle more than on weekly spelling tests. Spelling is related to writing and reading. The next step is to examine what methods are best for teaching spelling skills.

Spelling Teaching Techniques

Weekly spelling list tests with the pretest on Monday, skill work through out the week, and post test on Friday is still the most common instructional practice for teaching spelling in American classrooms (Seda, 1991). Between 90 to 95 percent of all spelling instruction today comes from pretest prior to instruction (Seda, 1991). In the beginning of the 20th century, high frequency word lists were used for spelling tests at the elementary school level (Sipe, 2003). The learning strategy often used by students was simple rote memorization, which proved to be an inefficient way of learning content related vocabulary terms (Bear & Templeton, 1998). Even if weekly tests were designed around a specific letter pattern or spelling principle, the lists didn't provide enough depth of knowledge or fit into any content area to really be of much use (Sipe, 2002).

Another problem pointed out earlier is written work. Challenged spellers struggle with written work and also with retention of correct spellings. Weekly spelling test scores may be quite good, but they are a poor indicator of how well a student will score on retention tests (Garber, 1987). Used as the only spelling strategy, a weekly list and test is not an effective strategy for improving the spelling ability of the challenged speller (Sipe, 2002, Templeton, 2002b).

Basals. The spelling basal is another method of teaching spelling. What is a

textbook basal? The typical spelling basal has an abundance of visually-based strategies (writing words over and over, writing words in blanks, word finds, writing words in boxes, matching words and definitions) for the student (Sipe 2003). One particular study showed that teachers in six classrooms using basal programs followed the book 96 percent of the time (Morris, Blanton, Blanton, & Perney, 1995). Seda (1989) writes, "Many teachers continue to teach spelling the way they were taught or the way the textbooks prescribe"(p. 321).

The ideal learning environment would include auditory, kinesthetic and meaning-based strategies (Sipe, 2003). If a student has poor visual memory and that is the only strategy he/she knows how to use, then he/she will continue to struggle. Teachers who have used basals report that students approach basal spelling lessons as another ho-hum drill and practice routine to be remembered for Friday's test and then dropped (L. Kurth & S. Dinsmore, personal communications, 2001). Many basal programs do teach important spelling patterns, but they move on to the next pattern before the last one was mastered (Garber, 1987).

Natural approach. The natural approach to spelling is another method (Graham, 2000). This is when students will learn to spell by being immersed in reading and writing. The natural approach to spelling would mean that no explicit-strategy instruction is given. While it did have a degree of validity in early elementary, not much was proven for older students (Graham, 2000).

Whole language. Another approach would be the use of whole language. With whole language, it was found that better spelling was a result of explicit-strategy instruction. In fact, explicit-strategy instruction in a whole language environment had

better results than just whole language alone or explicit-strategy instruction alone (Butyniec-Thomas & Woloshyn, 1997). This seems to support the idea that words with which students have interacted in some manner through the whole language experience might be more easily learned in combination with explicit-strategy instruction.

Personal lists. This brings up spelling instruction where students learn their own words and make their own spelling lists from their reading and writing experiences. There are several ways to do this. The use of personal student dictionaries, where students are recording words that are relevant to where they currently are in their reading and writing experiences, incorporate high-frequency words that are being continually misspelled (Miller, 2002).

There are some difficulties of personal spelling lists. A personal spelling list composed of isolated words does not allow for the incorporation of teaching of a particular spelling strategy and comes back to a rote memorization challenge. Also, students need some guidance in selecting words. Mosley (1987) (as cited in Graham, 1999, p. 87) found that "students with learning difficulties rarely selected words to learn that they frequently misspelled when writing." Time for individual guidance would be required for this method of spelling instruction.

Content area. Another way to gather spelling words is through content area reading. Again, this set of words would likely be relevant to the student's reading and writing experiences. Spelling becomes an extension of the curriculum rather than an isolated end. In one research study, more students completed spelling assignments and showed more interest in the upcoming lessons when content words were used (Salyers, 1992). Another way to gather the content area words would be to post high-use

vocabulary for each individual content area on the walls of the room to support the correct spelling on writing assignments (Sipe, 2003).

In considering the use of content subject area words, one must be careful to not fall into the trap of forming another list that must be learned one word at a time by utilizing rote memorization. Lists simply compiled from different curricular areas do not really promote spelling ability (Seda, 1991).

Explicit-strategy instruction. Another method of teaching spelling would be that of mini-lessons in which various spelling patterns and explicit-strategies are taught. If done through student discussion, this method is more effective than workbook pages or spelling tests (NCTE, n.d.). Formal spelling instruction gives students knowledge of strategies and patterns that help to correctly spell words that haven't been specifically taught (Gerber, 1986). Teachers can contribute adequate information so students will be able to detect, learn, and apply spelling patterns (Bear & Templeton, 1998; Templeton, 2002b).

There are various activities that can be used with mini lessons. Word sorts would be a useful one because it allows students to make their own discovery about words. When giving students words to sort, it is advised to not tell them the rule or pattern you want them to sort by, but rather let them discover it on their own which will allow them to internalize the rule and allow for discovery discussions. These discoveries should be recorded in a word study notebook.

Designing a word wall would be another spelling activity. Word walls can be used in many ways, but one this author has found successful is after posting the words, students watch for these words from their own reading experiences. They bring these examples to share with the class and then post a copy of their examples by the posted word.

Mnemonic devices can help in the memory of words that have no other strategy for spelling (Taylor, 1987). An example of a very small mini lesson would sharing with students that embarrass has two r's and two s's because two robbers were embarrassed in Sing Sing. Sometimes short lessons like this can give students the additional handle they need (Podhaizer, 1998).

Word webs are especially helpful spelling activities when students advance to the derivational constancy developmental level (Bear, Ivernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston 1996). Using a morphemic unit as the center and then attaching all the words that contain that unit, helps students to have a greater
understanding the meaning unit and how it is used to build additional words

Some mini lessons could involve student movement and interaction. Lessons involving movement include human spelling words where each student represents a letter. Lessons requiring interaction such as partner work that includes saying and spelling the word aloud, Greek and Latin Jeopardy, homophone rummy (Bear, Ivernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 1996). These various activities that all have a place in the teaching of spelling.

Summary

English spelling system. English spelling, as complex as it is, is composed of three layers of knowledge: alphabetical/phonetic, patterns, and meaning units. Research shows that spelling knowledge is several things: inductive learning, scaffolding, and explicit teaching (Masterson & Crede, 1999).

History of spelling instruction. Spelling instruction has varied over the years. At first spelling was taught in order to teach reading. In the 1930s a complete separation of reading and spelling brought about the grade level reading basal using high-frequency

word lists. The weekly routine of pretest, drill/practice, and post test became a fixture in most classrooms. Eventually whole language replaced the basal and specific spelling strategy and instruction became less frequent or routine. Some researchers even thought that spelling skills would just be absorbed.

Developmental research. Beginning in the 1970s, spelling researchers began to pursue the idea that students develop in certain stages when it comes to learning to spell. This helped to assimilate the three knowledge levels (alphabetical/phonetic, patterns, and meaning units)needed to spell the English language (Henderson & Templeton, 1986) into a continuum that could guide teachers in instruction (Bear & Templeton, 1998).

Spelling in middle school. Research shows that the middle school students can benefit from spelling instruction (National Council of Teachers of English, nd). Other researchers(Sipe, 2002; Templeton 2002b) ascertain that middle school and high school students need continued strategic spelling instructions.

Poor spellers versus good spellers. Spellers can be categorized into two divisions: good spellers and poor spellers. One out of every five U.S. adults have significant difficulty with spelling (Kelly,1992) (as cited in Sipe, 2003). Gentry (as cited in Neubert, 1990, p. 38) concluded that some poor spellers are poor spellers because they cannot memorize.

Reading, writing, and spelling connections. Researchers believe there is a reading, writing, and spelling connection. Development in one area of literacy relates to the development in other areas of literacy (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 1996). Understanding how words are put together is a means to more efficient and proficient writing and reading (Sipe, 2003). Perfetti (1997)"(as cited in Templeton,

2002a, p. 13). believes that the "practice of spelling should help reading more than the practice at reading helps spelling. Templeton found that spelling is important to writing growth (2002a).

Spelling teaching techniques. Various methods can be used for spelling instruction.). Simply giving a weekly spelling list and test is not an effective strategy for improving the spelling ability of the challenged speller (Sipe, 2002: Templeton 2002b). Basal spelling instruction may not provide the auditory, kinesthetic, and meaning-based strategies that non-visual learners need (Sipe, 2003). The natural learning approach appears to work with elementary students but has not been proven for older students (Graham, 2000).

Explicit-strategy spelling instruction utilized with whole language instruction was more successful than just whole language alone (Butyniec-Thomas & Woloshyn, 1997). Teachers can contribute adequate information in the form of explicit-strategy spelling mini-lessons so students will be able to detect, learn, and apply spelling patterns (Bear & Templeton, 1998).

Another method of spelling instruction is personal spelling lists. Personal spelling lists are supported by Miller (2002), but they have some challenges (Mosley (1987) (as cited in Graham, 1999, p. 87).

Chapter Four

Conclusions and Recommendations

In drawing conclusions from this literature review, it is anticipated the author will have a better designed program of spelling instruction that will work in the middle school classroom than she had prior to this study. A program was formulated by reviewing studies and research about spelling. Questions were asked and examined to obtain a better understanding of spelling. English spelling is a complex subject. One which is acquired at different developmental levels. Various practices have been used over the years to teach spelling. These were explored to establish which have proven to be successful strategies. After reviewing this information, a program of spelling instruction was designed for her classroom.

Conclusions

What is the history behind the English spelling system? There is a system to the English language. In a very casual investigation that may not seem to be the case; however, on further investigation research has shown that even though the English language has 26 letters with over 40 sounds, there is still a unique system of three knowledge layers that it follows (Neubert, 1990; Henderson & Templeton, 1986). This system is one that can be taught. Hanna, Hanna, Hodges, and Rudorf (1966) (as cited by Seda, 1989, p. 317) showed that 50 percent of the words can be spelled phonetically, using the alphabet/sound relationship. This means that in order to correctly spell, patterns and word unit meanings need to be learned, along with phonics instruction.

What is the history of spelling instruction? Spelling in the U.S. was first taught as preparation for reading. The practice of having separate reading and spelling instruction

was common practice by 1930. This then brought about the use of word lists and teaching from a reading basal, leading to the widespread use of a weekly routine of pretest, drill/practice, and post test (Haskins, 1997).

In the 1980s and 1990s, whole language instruction replaced the use of a reading basal and spelling basal. Specific spelling strategy instruction became less frequent or routine. As a result of whole language, the process for the acquisition of spelling skills was questioned. Some thought that possibly spelling was something just learned naturally through absorption (Zutell, n.d.; Graham, 2000).

In order to teach spelling better, much research has been done. Major research studies as to how students learn spelling revealed they learn in developmental stages (Gentry, 1982; Ehri, 1987; Henderson, 1990; Bear & Templeton,1998). This knowledge should guide our spelling programs, however as Stetson (1985) (as cited in Seda, 1989) pointed out, "What happens instructionally is not what research has shown to be best instructional practices."

How important is spelling in middle school? Spelling is not fully accomplished or achieved in elementary school (Templeton, 2002a). Have middle school students reached the last stage in the developmental continuum? No. Does spelling still need to be taught? Yes. Middle school students are on the developmental spelling continuum anywhere from the third to sixth (final) stage: within-word, syllable juncture and derivational constancy (see Appendix A). This spelling continuum means that a classroom could have students at various levels of the continuum, which in turn means that not all students will be studying the same skills or words. Specific spelling patterns may be taught to some still in the within-word pattern level (stage four) or the syllable juncture level (stage five). Some may

need to have a better understanding of how syllables combine or may need to learn suffixes and prefixes in the syllable juncture level (stage six). Others may be ready to learn various word meaning units in the derivational constancy stage.

Another reason spelling should be taught in middle school is because of its relationship to reading and writing. Teaching spelling skills helps students be better thinkers, readers, and writers (Wilhelm, 2002).

The middle school student should be taught explicit strategies when they are taught spelling. We must remember that there are both good spellers and poor or challenged spellers in the middle school. Frequently the poor spellers are those who have only been relying on visual memory to learn spelling. Students with visual memory problems will compensate by using other strategies if they are aware of them (Sipe, 2003).

What are some validated instructional spelling practices? Unfortunately, research doesn't always guide what happens in the classroom. Most teachers teach the way they were taught (Graham, 1983). The developmental stages research can be used to guide spelling instruction practices.

In exploring the many methods used, the standard was the weekly pretest, drill/practice, and post test. This is not a totally bad thing; some students respond well to this type of instruction. If spelling programs involve just rote memorization of a group of isolated words, little learning actually takes place and is retained (Sipe, 2002). Spelling words need to be at the student's developmental level (Templeton, 2002a). Basal texts and spelling workbooks perpetuate a problem because all students work through these texts regardless of their developmental level.

Studies have proven that words which are being used in the student's writing,

reading, and curricular areas are more relevant to the student and will be more easily learned (Salyers, 1992; Miller, 2002). The hazard here is the tendency to end up with a group of isolated words, which aren't relevant. Words need to be selected that are at the student's developmental level and relevant to the student.

The instruction of spelling needs to be explicit; learning spelling by being immersed in reading and writing isn't specific enough. Students need to learn spelling patterns and explicit strategies, which will make them life long spellers. To teach these patterns and strategies teachers need to use the developmental spelling stages (see Appendix A). Each student's spelling level needs to be established by an evaluation process such as those found in *Words Their Way* (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 1996). Once the student's developmental level has been established, spelling instruction becomes an individualized program.

Teachers need to use instructional methods that will get students actively involved in the learning process of spelling. One good method of doing this is playing with the words in a word sort, which allows a student to actively construct information about spelling. This way students can identify similarities and patterns that might emerge and then develop a rule that may apply. This then may lead to an awareness and then during future reading the student will be able to spot words with similar patterns.

The use of mini lessons of using explicit instruction about various patterns and strategies is recommended (Gerber, 1986). Unlike basal instruction which moves on to the next chapter highlighting a new strategy or pattern, students should spend an adequate amount of time needed to internalize a particular strategy.

Recommendations - What Spelling Program?

In trying to develop a program that best meets the needs of middle school students, the limitations of a middle school classroom and curriculum must be considered: limited time and an already full curriculum load. To justify the instruction of spelling, research shows spelling, reading, and writing are connected. Since improving spelling improves writing and reading, the ultimate goal of the language arts classroom (better readers and writers) is achieved by creating better spellers.

Awareness. The year will begin by making the students aware that we are all at different levels of development in many areas: athletically, physically, and mathematically. Some students are better at art and some are not so good in art; some students have great cooking skills and others need to learn cooking skills. Some students can read fluently and others are still developing their fluency. Some students are advanced spellers and some really struggle with spelling. The teacher's job is to help the student move from where he or she is currently performing to the next level; this is to help the student improve. What follows is my design of a new spelling program for my students.

Assessing developmental level. An evaluation test or inventory will given at the beginning of the year. I will start with the Elementary Qualitative Spelling Inventory: Spelling-By-Stage Assessment (Bear et al., 1996). This test has five sets of five words with specific administration and scoring directions. It takes no more than 15 minutes to administer to the whole class and provides the range of development for each student in the class. Secondly I will take three writing samples of each student's writing and assess them for spelling errors and skills shown. This will be evaluated by the Qualitative Spelling Checklist suggested in *Words Their Way* (Bear et al.,1996).

Group arrangement. Once the student's developmental level is determined, instruction can begin. That begins with an attitude. Teachers need to approach spelling and words with an inquisitive attitude (Templeton, 2002a). Instruction also should start with organization. Students can be grouped according to their developmental level. My class currently has specific reading and writing groups, so meshing in another type of group in the rotation will make it even more interesting, but workable. Four or five groups will be established to keep each at five or six students each. I will meet with each group once a week for 10 to 15 minutes to present an explicit strategy mini-lesson.

Designing lessons. These mini lessons will be different depending on the developmental level of the group. I anticipate most of my students being in the syllable juncture stage and resulting in two or three different groups at this same level so they can more easily participate in small group activities. I will probably have one group of within-word and one that is ready for derivational constancy. The development of these mini lessons may be a challenge, but there are some really good resources out there, such as Bear's, Invernizzi's, Templeton's and Johnston's (1996)*Words Their Way: Word Study of Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* (and supplementary books of word sorts for each developmental level) and Sipe's (2003) *They Still Can't Spell? Understanding and Supporting Challenged Spellers in Middle and High School.* Templeton and Morris (1999) offer a word of caution: even though research proves that emphasis should be on patterns, many teachers have limited knowledge of the nature or extent of patterns, especially morphemic patterns.

Within these groups, I plan to have some partner work with word sorts prior to our meeting for mini lesson instruction. Words (both those that have a similar pattern and

some that do not) will be given that deal with the particular pattern to be discussed in that week's mini lesson. This way students will be able to have spent time on their own inductive construction of spelling analysis. This will form a good foundation for the mini lesson.

Students will need a spelling notebook. This will have several sections. One section of this notebook will be devoted to work resulting from the student/group mini lesson work. Another section will be a personal list of spelling errors where words the student has misspelled in written work are listed; personal reflection will be recorded in this section as the student notices any particular patterns or similarities in errors.

Spelling within daily work. Students' written work containing spelling errors will be very important. I have currently been marking the line containing an error, and I will continue this. Students will find the misspelled word, circle it and write the correct spelling above it. In the notebook, the student will write the date of the writing assignment, every misspelled word spelled as it was, the correct spelling, and any type of rule or strategy that might be applied next time to that particular word. I anticipate five classes of language arts this year, which means that spelling notebooks will need to be collected on a rotating basis, probably one class per week. I will check to see that students are drawing some correct observations. I will also check to see if any words are being misspelled repeatedly and why.

Testing spelling. What about spelling tests? We will have them but not every week. Each student will design his/her own list and write it in the notebook These words will come from mini lessons (75% - 15 words) and personal misspelled words (15% - 5 words). I won't give the tests. This is based on the overall philosophy established at the

beginning of the year. Students are working on spelling to improve. Partners will administer tests, and students will grade their own test with the partner watching. Students correcting their own errors is the single most important element in learning to spell (Seda, 1991). These scores will be recorded. These tests will probably occur every two to three weeks and probably on Fridays during that time period used on the other week days for mini lesson work. Testing in this manner should allow us to master a particular strategy without moving on, which is a hazard of basal instructions (Garber, 2000).

Our school year is organized into three equal grading periods called trimesters. Ideally, I would like to conference with each student once, besides monitoring their spelling progress through notebooks and tests. Each student's spelling test will be individualized. However, each student will be learning at his or her own developmental stage and making strides to move from one developmental stage to the next.

Evaluation of program. The same beginning of the year inventory, the Elementary Qualitative Spelling Inventory: Spelling-By-Stage Assessment (Bear et al., 1996), will be administered at the end of the year. Comparing the beginning of the year scores with the end of the year scores will help me determine if students have moved in their spelling stages. But more importantly, I should be able to tell in their written work if they are making fewer errors. Using the same Qualitative Spelling Checklist suggested in *Words Their Way* (Bear et al.,1996) to evaluate students' end of the year writing samples and comparing it with the beginning of the year scores will also validate spelling growth made over the year.

The last element of my spelling program for this year involves the other teachers on my teaching team (an advantage of the middle school). Each subject has some high-

frequency words peculiar to that subject (Thibodeau, 2002). These words might or might not change from unit to unit. At one of our first team meetings, I will ask the teachers to make a word wall of those particular words in their classrooms. Team teachers can also submit a word list that can be put in the students' spelling notebooks and content area folders.

Students associate writing with spelling. If content words are readily available for spelling in classwork, then the assignments will probably be of better quality. An added benefit might be that I don't have to hear as many "They just don't know how to spell" comments. I plan to utilize a word wall in my room. During this first year, I will ask for a printed alphabetical list of those words that students could put in that subject notebook to help with homework in the evening. In addition I will ask the students to help create a list of words they use in writing and reading in other subject areas.

Trying the Plan

If something is not working, be willing to give something else a try. My research has pointed out some major weaknesses in my current spelling program: pretest, drill and practice, and posttest of random words. I will try the proposed plan, which incorporates and utilizes the research of many experts. Being aware that most teachers just teach the way they were taught, regardless of the research, makes me all the more determined to be one of those who do try to teach spelling in a new way that incorporates research.

Staff development activities, at least for language arts teachers, should involve some review of spelling patterns and the explicit spelling strategies used to spell them, so that language arts teachers are more comfortable and confident in giving explicit spelling strategy mini-lessons.

Future Adjustments

Trying a new program, especially one not tested, will have its frustrations. Keeping an open mind and the ability to be flexible will be key in this project. Maintaining a log of observations will help as the program is tweaked and adjusted for the following years.

Future Research

After a year of teaching this way, student work can be evaluated. Annual standardized tests are given in October in our district. It will be interesting to compare the spelling results for these students this year and next year to see what growth is made. The spelling scores on the standardized test could be compared with the previous years' growth to see if this teaching method is making any difference.

Teaching is all about making a difference. I hope to do that in my approach to spelling this next year: in my students' attitudes and abilities, and in the attitudes of the teachers around me. This literature review has made a difference in my approach to spelling instruction in my classroom and has therefore been very worthwhile.

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Appendix A
Developmental Stages of Spelling

Spelling Stage	Development Signs	Age/Grade Range	Corresponding
Prephonemic	Listens to stories Looks at books Plays with writing instruments Scribbles/Draws Mocks linear writing	1-7 years Pre K-Mid First Grade	Emergent
Semiphonemic/ Early Letter Names	Writing includes initial consonants and final	4-7 years K- Mid Second Grade	Early Beginning

Letter Name	Uses single vowel in major
	   syllable
	Spells vowels by feel and
	   sound
	Learns Short Vowel Families
	Spells Most CVC (consonant-
	   vowel-consonant)
	   words correctly
	Includes more blends and
	   diagraphs
	Handles preconsonant nasals
	   correctly (e.g. lump)
		5-9 years
		Early First to Early
		Third Grade
			Middle to Late
			Beginning

Within-Word
Pattern
	Spells long vowel patterns
	   (CVCe, CVVC, CVV)
	Spells complex single syllable
	   words (e.g. CVck,
	   CVCght)
	Handles diphthongs (e.g.
	   noise, gown, and
	   shout)
		6-12 years
		First to Mid Fourth
		Grade
			Transitional

Syllable Juncture	Spells most two-three syllable
	   words correctly
	Handles words with
	   prefixes and suffixes
	Learns how syllables combine
	Spells lower frequency vowel
	   patterns (e.g. oi-enjoy
	   embroider)
		8-18 years
		Third Through
		Eighth Grade
			Intermediate

Derivational
Constancy
	Spells most words correctly
	Makes meaning connections
	   among words that
	   share bases and roots
	Word choice in writing is
	   more varied - showing
	   greater shades of
	   meaning
		10 and up years
		Fifth to Twelfth
		Grades
			Advanced

(Source: Bear & Templeton, 1998)

Appendix B

Examples of a Spelling Pattern with Exceptions Noted

Vowel-Consonant-Silent e Rule: The first vowel is long and the ending e is silent.

Nose

Note

Rote

Lone

Phone

Mole

Whole

Hole

Mode

Hose

Home

Dome

Shore

Wrote

Exceptions:

Love

None

Done